DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 582 PS 016 412

TITLE Early Childhood Services: Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions.
INSTITUTION Alberta Dept. of Education, Edmonton. Early Childhood Services.
PUB DATE Jan 84
NOTE 22p.; For an earlier interim edition of this handbook, see ED 221 287. Photographs may not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Beliefs; Community Programs; Coordination; Developmental Programs; Educational Principles; Foreign Countries; Health; *Individual Development; *Intervention; Nutrition; Parent Participation; *Preschool Children; Safety; *Social Services; Staff Development; State Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Alberta; Early Childhood Services

ABSTRACT

This document describes the early childhood services program in Alberta, Canada and its goals for accomplishment with children, within families, and in the community. Early Childhood Services (ECS), Alberta Education, is concerned with the provision of a coordinated system of local, regional, and provincial programs and services to meet the developmental and special needs of young children and their families. Included in the system are government departments which have responsibility for health, social, educational, and recreational services for children and their families and for the training of staff. Material covered in the document is intended for use by parents, staff, and community services as a guide for the development, implementation, and evaluation of local, regional, and provincial programs; and for the identification of staff development and parent needs. Section I outlines the beliefs and principles guiding ECS activities. Section II states ECS goals. Comprising half the guide, Section III describes program dimensions, including those centered on children's self-concept, physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and creative development, as well as staff development, parent participation, health, and coordination of community services. The guide is illustrated with numerous black and white photographs. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EA 020 [illegible]

Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions

PS 016412

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Alberta Dept. of Education
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Early Childhood Services

Alberta
EDUCATION

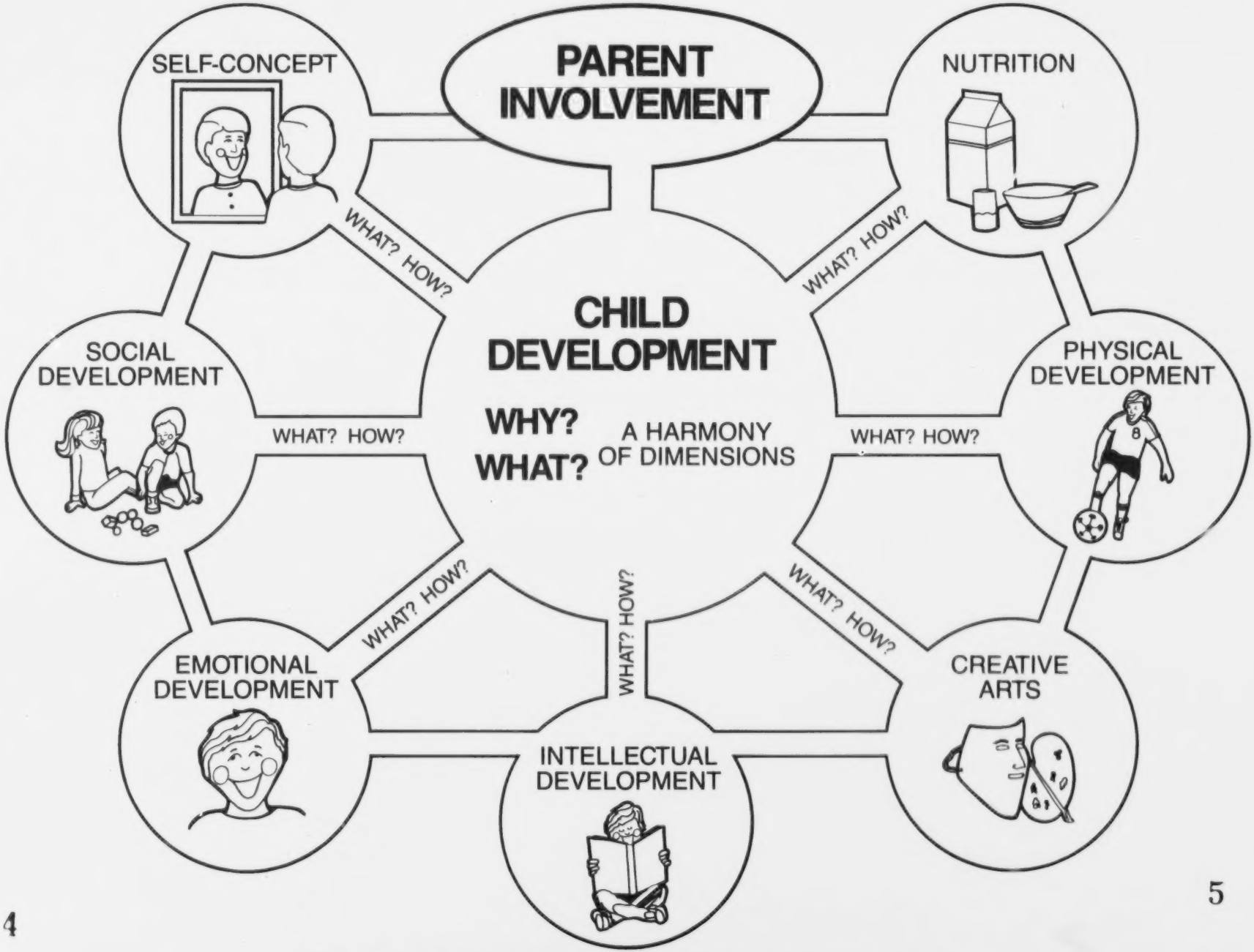
2

Early Childhood Services

Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions

Alberta Education
January, 1984

This handbook is issued under the authority of the Minister of Education pursuant to Section 6 of the ***Department of Education Act****.*



Relationships among the program dimensions

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION iii

SECTION I EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES PHILOSOPHY 1

A. Beliefs / 1

B. Principles / 2

SECTION II EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES GOALS 6

SECTION III PROGRAM DIMENSIONS 6

Introduction / 7

1. Self-Concept Development / 8
2. Health and Physical Development / 8
3. Social Development / 10
4. Emotional Development / 11
5. Intellectual Development / 12
6. Creative Development / 13
7. Parent Involvement / 14
8. Staff Development / 15
9. Coordination of Community Services / 16

Introduction

Early Childhood Services, Alberta Education, is concerned with the provision of a coordinated system of local, regional and provincial programs and services to meet the developmental and special needs* of young children and their families. Included in the system are government departments who have responsibility for health, social, educational and recreational services for children and their families and for the training of staff.

This document describes what ECS is attempting to accomplish with the child, the child's family and the community. The document is for the use of parents, staff and community services as a guideline for the development, implementation and evaluation of local, regional, and provincial programs, and for the identification of staff development and parent needs. The philosophy, goals and program dimensions apply to all ECS programs including those with a specific linguistic, cultural or spiritual emphasis.

Definition of Terms

The following terms which are used throughout the text are defined as follows:

ECS Program:
An ECS program refers to a program for children, parents and staff, with educational goals and objectives, funded by Alberta Education under the Early Childhood Services program, and which makes use of the services provided by a variety of government departments and community agencies.

Education:
The terms education and educational, as used here, include any experiences which contribute to the development of the whole child. Education, in this sense, is a shared responsibility of the home, school, church and community.

Staff:
Staff refers to those who administer, deliver or support the ECS program, such as coordinators, teachers, instructional assistants, aides and volunteers who work with young children in an ECS program.

Program Dimension:
A program dimension is an essential part of the ECS program. Each dimension is described in terms of desired outcomes for children, parents, staff and community.

Community Services:
This term refers to government departments, agencies and individuals which provide health, recreation, social and educational services for young children and their families e.g. boards of health, recreation departments, day care agencies, district home economists, service clubs and other community support groups.

* Developmental needs are the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and creative needs of all young children. Special needs refer to those areas where specialized assistance is required due to some form of exceptionality in the child's development.

Section I
Early Childhood Services Philosophy

A. Beliefs

The beliefs inherent in the Early Childhood Services system include:

1. The Child

- Each child is unique and may have abilities which are different from those of other children.
- Parents and society should provide opportunities for children to develop their abilities to their fullest potential.
- The dignity and worth of each child must be respected and enhanced.
- At any given time, each child is developing physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and creatively. All these areas are related to and dependent on one another and are of equal importance in the child's development.
- The child whose needs have been met adequately is more likely to develop into a healthy, responsible and secure person.
- The child has a natural curiosity that, in an appropriate environment, results in an eagerness to learn. Providing opportunities that stimulate this curiosity is important.
- Play is essential to children's learning.
- The handicapped child has the same developmental needs as other children as well as those which are a direct or indirect result of the exceptionality.
- The prevention of problems is preferable to remedial treatment.

2. The Family

- The dignity and worth of the family must be respected and enhanced.
- The family, in its various forms, is a fundamental and an important unit in society. Its function in meeting the developmental and special needs of children must be recognized and supported.
- Effective programs require the commitment of parents and other individuals.
- Parents have the right and the responsibility to be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of programs for their children and themselves.

3. Staff

- Effective programs require the commitment of staff who possess the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to meet the needs of children and their parents.
- Staff with different backgrounds of training may be required to meet the various needs of young children and parents.

4. The Community

- Because individuals, families and communities are unique culturally, economically and geographically, programs should be flexible and responsive to needs.
- Decisions to operate an ECS program or enrol children younger than the compulsory school age in ECS programs should be voluntary on the part of school boards and parents.
- Children with handicaps and those living in designated disadvantaged areas should receive priority.
- Community resource persons can assist in meeting developmental and special needs of children and families.
- A comprehensive, coordinated, team approach to the delivery of services is desirable in order to meet the needs of children, parents, staff and community.

B. Principles

Early Childhood Services is based on the following principles:

1. **Human Development is a Continuous, Sequential, Interactive Process**

Human development is a continuous process starting with simple skills which are gradually and continuously built upon and incorporated into more complex skills. For example, a child walks before running, babbles before talking and plays alone before playing with others.

Each child has a unique rate of development and each child, at any given time, is developing physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and creatively. Children are active, feeling, thinking, creative people who associate with others. These areas of development are related to and dependent on one another as the child interacts with the environment, both physical (materials) and social (people). The child is influenced by the environment and, in turn, influences the environment by affecting the behavior of others.

Development in one area directly or indirectly affects development in all other areas. For example, the adequacy of a child's diet (pre and post-natal) can affect growth, feelings and ability to learn.

A child's physical characteristics can affect personality, self-concept, attitudes, emotions and relationships with others. The development of language can aid the child's thinking. Anxiety and stress can interfere with the child's ability to solve problems and to get along with others.

Each child needs attention, acceptance, and love. Each child also needs to experience and express feelings, to be physically healthy and active, to develop language skills and thinking processes, to develop relationships with others and to communicate in unique and individual ways. Each child needs to develop a responsible attitude toward other children and society. The meeting of these needs, in an integrated manner, contributes to the total development of the child.

2. **Early Childhood is a Particularly Significant Period in Human Development**

There is much evidence to suggest that the quality of a child's early experiences (including pre-natal) affects health and physical development, ability to learn and personality.

The child is thought to be very susceptible and responsive to influences in the environment during the early years. Independence, initiative, decision-making, creativity, ability to learn, ability to relate to others and feelings of self-worth all have their beginnings in early childhood. Therefore, the child must receive stimulation and security to have these developmental needs met adequately.

3. **The Self-Concept is Important in Human Development**

Self-concept is the image one has of oneself and includes knowledge and feelings about one's status, appearance and aptitudes.

The way each child is treated by significant people — family, peers and teachers — greatly influences the development of the child's self-concept, especially during the early years when the self-concept is being formed. Through understanding of how others see them, children learn to value themselves and decide whether they are worthwhile and competent.

High self-esteem results from a positive self-concept and the acceptance of oneself as a worthwhile person. The child's self-concept influences behavior. Usually, the child with high self-esteem tends to try new experiences, to acquire a greater variety of skills and to relate to people more easily than the child who feels inadequate. If children are to develop images of themselves as truly adequate people, they need experiences that nurture and contribute to their feelings of adequacy and worth.

4. Children Learn Through Interaction With Their Environment

Young children are naturally curious. They learn through exploring and experimenting with their environments. They also learn by imitating the behavior of other people and by receiving reinforcement in the form of affection and approval. The child's view of the world differs from that of adults. Children need time to come to know and develop their own understanding of their surroundings.

Young children think in very concrete terms, noticing the immediately observable characteristics of objects and people, such as shape or color. They are still laying a foundation for abstract and logical thinking. Therefore, children need concrete, first-hand experiences before they are able to understand abstract concepts. For example, playing with containers of various sizes and shapes can help children develop concepts such as relative weight and size at a level they can understand. Later, they will be able to understand more complex abstractions such as density and volume.

As the child learns something new, the information is added to previous knowledge or changes understanding of prior learnings. Young children learn best through experiencing a variety of enriching, stimulating situations that involve all the senses: touch, sight, hearing, smell, taste and body movement. The more diverse the child's experiences, the greater the foundation for the formation of ideas, the development of language, the solution of problems and the expression of thoughts and feelings.

Creative thinking is the ability to generate more than one answer to a question or solution to a problem, to use everyday materials in novel or unusual ways, and to use one's imagination in play. The child's creativity can be encouraged by asking "What if?", questions that suggest many possible answers, and by providing materials and activities that stretch the imagination and encourage the trying out of new ideas.

In summary, young children need concrete, first-hand experience with a variety of materials and people to build a solid foundation for later abstract learning. They need experiences that lead to the development of logical thinking, reading, writing and mathematical skills. They also need experiences that encourage creative thinking, stimulate the imagination and develop non-verbal ways of understanding and expressing ideas. Children need to be encouraged to express their ideas in a variety of ways, whether through art, movement, music, drama or language.

5. Play is Essential to the Child's Development

Play is a central and necessary part of children's development. Play includes any activity children have freely chosen, is under their control and is not dominated or imposed by an adult. Play is a major learning process and, with its risk-free atmosphere, provides a natural opportunity for young children to add to their knowledge, learn new skills and to practise familiar ones. It provides many situations in which the child observes, discovers, reasons and solves problems. Play brings together physical and intellectual abilities, emotional health, creativity and the ability to get along with others.

Parents, early childhood staff and communities must provide the materials, time and space so that play is an integral part of every child's day. They can carefully plan and provide opportunities that capitalize on the natural tendency to play. For example, playing with water or sand, if the appropriate materials are made available, can provide the child with the experience of feeling different textures and hearing different sounds, and help in the understanding

of concepts such as weight, size, shape, roughness or smoothness. If provided with such opportunities and allowed choices as to how to use the materials, the child will select activities that reflect personal needs, interests and developmental level.

Parents and staff have a role which goes beyond structuring the play environment. This includes making suggestions or asking questions which leave the activity under the child's control but which may serve to reinforce, extend or clarify what is being learned in the play situation.

6. Parents are Primary Agents in the Child's Development

The first and most significant environment of the child is provided by the immediate family. There is increasing evidence that individuals learn from the first days of life. Since parents and other caregivers control and structure the environment, they become the child's first teachers. Through their daily contact with parents, children develop ideas, language, and an understanding of the world and their place in it.

Parents are intimately involved in meeting the child's basic physical needs, including adequate nutrition and health. Similarly, they meet the child's need for love, security and relationships with others, and provide stimulating activities that allow for individuality and creativity to be expressed.

Many things influence the parents' ability to meet the needs of their children. For example, knowledge of child development assists the parent in providing appropriate mental and physical stimulation.

Social and technological change, economic conditions and geographic mobility have resulted in changes in the structure and function of the family. To be better prepared to meet these changing conditions, parents need the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills in working with young children.

7. There is Need for Coordinated, Responsive Services

There are many agencies concerned with providing services to young children and their families. Parents and staff need to know what services are available and how to obtain them. A system of cooperation, at the local and regional levels, is required to deliver programs that meet the needs of children, parents and staff.

The coordination of services is often suggested as one means to achieve a more comprehensive, responsive and less fragmented system. Coordination may be achieved through communication and cooperation among services with respect to personnel, facilities and funds. Through coordinating services, separately administered health, educational, recreational and social programs should operate as a network of services that collectively meet the needs of children, parents and staff.

Section II
Early Childhood Services Goals

The goals of Early Childhood Services are based on the beliefs and principles described in Section I. They provide the direction, scope and anticipated outcomes of the program for children, parents, staff and community services. The goals are as follows:

1. To contribute to the development of a positive self-concept in young children. This includes the knowledge, acceptance and appreciation of oneself as an individual and an acceptance and appreciation of others as individuals.
2. To enhance the physical development of young children. This includes the provision of adequate health care, particularly nutrition and dental care, and the development of gross motor, fine motor and perceptual motor skills.
3. To enhance the emotional, social and moral development of young children. This includes the experience and expression of feelings, the demonstration of independence and the development of positive relationships with others.
4. To enhance the intellectual development of young children. This includes the development of thinking processes and the acquisition and use of language.
5. To enhance the creative development of young children. This involves the use of past experience to develop new ideas, novel approaches or original products and includes the expression of self through creative thought, language, music, movement, drama and art.
6. To contribute to the involvement of parents in their children's education. Involvement includes a variety of ways for parents to take part in the development, implementation and evaluation of programs.
7. To enhance the competence of staff by providing opportunities to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills required to develop, implement and evaluate programs which are consistent with the philosophy of ECS.
8. To contribute to a comprehensive, coordinated system of early childhood services which includes:
   a) providing opportunities for individuals, families and communities to identify needs as they relate to young children and to work cooperatively toward meeting these needs.
   b) identifying gaps in services for young children and their families.
   c) using existing services for young children and their families.
   d) developing and providing required services.
   e) planning and implementing a coordinated delivery of services.

Section III
Program Dimensions

Introduction

This section describes the program dimensions of Early Childhood Services. Based on the philosophy and goals described in Sections I and II, the dimensions are: physical development, including health and physical skills; social development; emotional development; self-concept; intellectual and creative development; parent involvement; staff development and coordination of community services.

The dimensions are divided into objectives for parents, staff, community services and young children. The objectives identify the basic ingredients of ECS programs and provide general guidelines for the development, implementation and evaluation of programs, while allowing for flexibility in meeting the unique needs of local programs. This section provides a basis from which a variety of appropriate methods for meeting the needs of children and their families may be developed and applied.

Dimensions one to six, which correspond to the areas of child development, have been separated for clarity and emphasis only. All of these areas are related to each other. For example, creative expression is an intellectual process (forming ideas) as well as an emotional experience (expressing feelings). Similarly, the child's self-concept influences, and is influenced by how he or she performs physically, socially and intellectually.

The emphasis in this section is on the developmental needs common to all young children. However, some children and their families experience unique needs in particular areas of development. A "special needs" category has been included to allow for these.

Moral Development

Parents are the primary and most significant role models in the child's acquisition of moral behavior. Consequently, educators and other adults who work with young children cannot assume primary responsibility. They can, nevertheless, perform a significant role in support of the values and attitudes generally deemed desirable by the home, church and society.

While moral and spiritual development have not been treated as separate program dimensions in this document, parents and local ECS operators are expected to give careful consideration to these areas of development as they plan the learning environment in which their program will operate.

Warm, supportive and fair treatment of children in a group setting can go a long way toward encouraging children to become independent thinkers with identity, judgment and the ability to guide their own behavior. Many things have an impact on the formation of children's attitudes and moral behavior - how the staff interacts with children, how interpersonal conflicts are mediated and the respect which teachers and other adults show toward each other and toward the children.

Responsibility for Program Dimensions

While the family has the most significant role, the responsibility for meeting the developmental and special needs of children is shared by local programs, regional coordinating committees, government departments and service agencies.

The dimensions described on the following pages apply to parents and staff involved in local ECS programs as well as to community services (including government departments) that share, with local programs, responsibility for meeting the health, social, educational and recreational needs of young children and their families.

Parents, staff and community services are expected to apply the following dimensions in a manner appropriate to the particular needs and the developmental level of each child.

1. Self-Concept Development

A child's self-concept is central to all areas of development. How children perceive and feel about themselves influences, and is influenced by, how each one performs physically, intellectually, socially and creatively. Therefore, to contribute to the development of positive self-concepts in young children, it is important for parents, staff and community services to:

1.1 acquire knowledge and understanding of the factors that contribute to the development of a positive self-concept in young children.

1.2 accept and value each child as a worthwhile human being which includes respecting the child's family, language and culture.

1.3 plan activities which help children to express how they feel about themselves.

1.4 recognize individual differences in self-concept and use these as a basis for program planning.

1.5 plan activities and provide materials that encourage the development of a positive self-concept.

To enhance the development of a positive self-concept in young children, programs should provide the opportunity for young children to:

1.6 acquire knowledge and acceptance of themselves as worthwhile individuals which includes acceptance of their limitations.

1.8 develop and maintain pride in family, language and cultural heritage.

1.9 develop feelings of self-worth as a result of experiencing competence and success.

Special Needs

Some children have very low self-esteem which can affect all aspects of their behavior and performance. Programs should:

1.10 identify and assist children who have low-esteem.

2. Health and Physical Development

Health and Safety

To ensure the adequate health of young children, it is important for parents, staff and community services to:

2.1 recognize the need for good physical and mental health in young children.

2.2 provide an environment that obtains and maintains health in young children which includes:
- a) an environment free of known factors that cause accidents.
- b) an environment free of known factors that cause illness.

2.3 use children's health and safety needs as a basis for program planning. This includes developing in children knowledge and attitudes which promote health and safety.

2.4 acquire knowledge and understanding of good nutrition which will encourage:
- a) providing nutritious food.
- b) planning activities and providing information about nutrition.
- c) assessing attitudes regarding nutrition and developing strategies for change if required.

2.5 acquire knowledge and understanding of good dental health practices.

Special Needs

Some young children have special health needs. Programs should:

2.6 identify and assess health needs in young children.

2.7 assist young children who have health problems.

Physical Development

To ensure normal physical development of young children, it is important for parents, staff and community services to:

2.8 acquire knowledge and understanding of the physical development of young children which includes:
a) assessing what the child is able to do physically.
b) recognizing and accepting individual differences in physical development.

2.10 plan activities and provide materials that contribute to the development of physical skills in young children.

To enhance the physical development of young children, programs should provide the opportunity for young children to:

2.11 develop **gross motor skills**.
These skills involve large muscle activity and are present in movements such as crawling, walking, running, leaping, jumping, hopping, galloping, skipping and climbing.

2.12 develop **fine motor skills**.
These skills involve muscles in the arms, hands and fingers. They include finger speed, arm steadiness, arm and hand precision, finger and hand dexterity and are present in activities that involve the manupulation of small materials.

2.13 develop **perceptual motor skills**.
These skills involve the ability to combine information received from the sense organs with a motor response. For example, coordinated movement such as catching or kicking involves the use of perceptual motor skills.

The important perceptual motor skills include:

a) **body awareness:**
the ability to identify body parts and understand their function.

b) **spatial awareness:**
the awareness of how much space the body occupies and the ability to move the body through space effectively.

c) **directional awareness:**
the awareness of direction: left-right, up-down, forward-backward, sideways, etc.

d) **temporal awareness:**
the sense of timing which is necessary for coordinated movements such as catching or bouncing balls.

e) **sensory awareness:**
seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting.

2.14 to develop **fundamental movement abilities**. These abilities include:

a) **coordination:**
the ability to integrate information from the senses with the motor system to form well-timed, efficient movements. For example, eye-hand and eye-foot coordination of the hands or feet when kicking, catching, throwing, hitting or climbing.

b) **balance and stability:**
the ability to judge a change in the body that affects one's balance and to move quickly and accurately to compensate.

c) **locomotion:**
the ability to move from one place to another using a variety of pathways (straight, curved, zig-zag) and movements.

d) **rhythm:**
the ability to perform repetitive, regular actions such as those involved in dancing, clapping or marching. Rhythm is fundamental to coordinated movement.

Special Needs

In addition to the above, some children have special needs related to the physical area of development. To adequately meet these needs programs should:

2.15 identify and assess physical, perceptual and sensory needs in young children.

2.16 assist children with physical, perceptual and sensory problems.

3. Social Development

To enhance the social development of young children it is important for parents, staff and community services to:

3.1 acquire knowledge and understanding of the social development of young children which includes:
  a) assessing how the child interacts with others.
  b) setting standards for acceptable behavior and serving as appropriate role models.
  c) recognizing and accepting individual differences in the social development of children.

3.2 recognize and accept each child as an individual, as a member of a family, peer group, community and particular culture.

3.3 enhance feelings of mutual respect, acceptance and caring among children and adults.

3.4 construct an environment that encourages social interaction among children and adults.

3.5 use children's identified social needs as a basis for program planning.

3.6 plan activities and provide materials that encourage the social development of young children.

To enhance the social development of young children, programs should provide the opportunity for young children to:

3.7 develop positive relationships with others (family, peers, staff and other adults in the community).

3.8 cooperate and share with others.

3.9 develop awareness of their cultural heritage and respect for other cultural groups in their community.

3.10 use a problem-solving approach to deal with interpersonal conflict.

3.11 develop an awareness of the needs of others and an acceptance of individual differences.

3.12 develop an awareness of the community which includes appreciation of resources such as block parents, hospitals, etc.

3.13 take part as a member of a group which includes:
  a) giving and following directions
  b) listening to others
  c) giving help to and receiving help from peers and adults.

Special Needs

Some children have difficulty with interpersonal relationships. Programs should:

3.14 identify, assess and assist children who are having difficulty getting along with others.

4. Emotional Development

To enhance the emotional development of young children, it is important for parents, staff and community services to:

4.1 acquire knowledge and understanding of the emotional needs of young children which includes:
  a) assessing the emotional needs of the child.
  b) recognizing and accepting individual differences in emotional development.

4.2 provide an environment in which the child is accepted, respected and feels secure.

4.3 assist the child in the recognition and appropriate expression of feelings.

4.4 use children's emotional needs as a basis for program planning.

4.5 plan activities and provide materials that encourage the emotional development of young children.

4.6 recognize, accept and express their own feelings.

4.7 develop awareness and respect for the feelings of others.

To enhance the emotional development of young children, programs should provide the opportunity for young children to:

4.8 recognize, accept and express their feelings.

4.9 cope with frustration and failure.

4.10 express anger in appropriate ways.

4.11 give and receive affection.

4.12 demonstrate appropriate emotional behavior.

4.13 develop independence.

4.14 make decisions.

4.15 develop initiative.

4.16 become involved in self-directed activities.

Special Needs

Some children have special needs related to their emotional development. Programs should:

4.17 identify and assess emotional needs in young children.

4.18 assist young children who have emotional problems.

5. Intellectual Development

To enhance the intellectual development of young children, it is important for parents, staff and community services to:

5.1 acquire knowledge and understanding of the intellectual development of young children which include:
- a) understanding stages of cognitive growth;
- b) assessing the intellectual needs of the child;
- c) recognizing and accepting individual differences in intellectual development.

5.2 use children's intellectual needs as a basis for program planning.

5.3 provide an environment that encourages self-directed learning.

5.4 plan activities and provide materials that stimulate the intellectual development of children and are appropriate to each child's level of development.

5.5 initiate, interact and participate appropriately in the child's play to achieve desired learning outcomes.

To enhance the intellectual development of young children, programs should provide the opportunity for young children to:

5.6 select, plan and organize their own learning activities for a significant portion of the program day.

5.7 develop positive feelings towards learning.

5.8 develop observation skills by obtaining and organizing information about objects and events through use of the five senses.

5.9 acquire knowledge and understanding of the properties of objects and events in the environment which includes:
- a) classifying objects according to common properties such as color, size, shape and texture.

b) comparing objects according to size, shape, mass, volume and weight.
c) arranging objects or events in logical order.
d) measuring according to a unit of measurement.
e) pairing items according to common relationships.

5.10 develop an understanding of the relationship between cause and effect.

5.11 develop concepts related to number, space and time.

5.12 develop questioning and problem solving skills.

5.13 develop language skills which include:
a) using sounds, words and grammatical structures.
b) understanding and using language in descriptive, narrative or explanatory forms.
c) using language for communication with self and others.
d) increasing knowledge of words and their meaning.
e) giving and following verbal directions.

5.14 develop listening skills which include:
a) attending to and re-telling a story.
b) discriminating between and identifying gross sounds.
c) repeating simple sound patterns.
d) remembering and carrying out simple verbal instructions.

5.15 develop an awareness of the role of print, non-print and of the electronic media as vehicles for communicating and storing information.

Special Needs

Some children have special needs in the intellectual area of development. Programs should:

5.16 identify and assess learning needs in young children.

5.17 assist young children with learning problems.

5.18 identify, assess and assist young children with persistent speech or language difficulties.

6. Creative Development

Creative thinking is the ability to use past experience to generate new ideas or new combinations of ideas. It is basic to all creative self-expression and creative problem-solving and is indicated by:

a) using imagination and using materials in novel and unusual ways.
b) giving more than one answer to a question.
c) finding more than one solution to a problem.

Present in all children, including those with special needs, creative thinking is a process of exploration, experimentation, invention and discovery, often resulting in a visible form, or product, that communicates a child's thoughts, ideas or feelings. Separated here for emphasis only, the ability to think and express oneself creatively pervades all areas of development: physical, emotional, self-concept, intellectual and social.

To enhance the creative development of young children, it is important for parents, staff and community services to:

6.1 acquire knowledge and understanding of creative development in children.

6.2 recognize and appreciate the creativity present in all children.

6.4 recognize and accept individual differences and preferences in creative expression.

6.5 plan activities and provide materials that encourage creative thinking and expression in young children.

6.6 use the need for children to think creatively as a basis for program planning.

6.7 respect unusual questions and imaginative ideas.

To enhance the creative development of young children, programs should provide the opportunity for young children to:

6.8 explore the properties of a variety of materials and objects including natural and man-made objects, art material, sound and movement.

6.9 try out their ideas within a safe, supportive environment.

6.10 express their ideas, perceptions, feelings and thoughts through the use of language, sound, shapes, colors and movement.

6.11 develop a flexible, open-ended approach to the solution of problems.

6.12 enhance the sensitivity and selectivity of the senses.

6.13 express themselves in a spontaneous, uninhibited manner through a variety of media.

6.14 produce original or unusual ideas and products.

6.15 use imagination and fantasy and pretend to be different people, objects, shapes, colors etc.

6.16 develop skill in asking questions.

6.17 develop receptivity to new experiences.

Special Needs

Some children may have special talents in the area of creative development. Programs should:

6.18 identify and give encouragement to children with exceptional creative talents.

7. Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is any activity which brings parents into a special relationship with their child, the child's teacher, or community resource persons through which the parent is enabled to assist their child's development and to experience personal growth. Parent involvement in their children's educational program brings about benefits for the child, the parent and the educational program.

To contribute to the involvement of parents, programs should provide opportunities for parents to:

7.1 identify their needs in relation to the philosophy, goals and program dimensions in this document.

7.2 use these needs as a basis for planning and implementing programs that provide opportunities for parents to:

a) enhance their knowledge and acquire the skills and attitudes necessary to meet the developmental and special needs of their children. This includes receiving information about handicapping conditions and the integration of handicapped children into regular educational programs.

b) be involved in advisory and decision making activities related to policy development, administration, program planning, implementation and evaluation.

c) be involved as teacher of their own child in the home.

d) be involved as a special resource.

e) be involved as an aide in a centre or home program.

f) be involved in advocacy roles on behalf of children.

g) be involved as support to the program through such activities as fund raising, providing materials or preparing newsletters.

Special Needs

Programs should provide parents of exceptional children with the opportunity to:

7.3 receive adequate information about their children's exceptionality and its implications.

7.4 be involved in deciding about placement and programs for their children and transfering program techniques into the home.

7.5 increase their coping ability through belonging to particular interest groups and associations.

8. Staff Development

The importance of staff competencies in the provision of appropriate learning experiences for young children cannot be over-emphasized. The ECS Task Force on Teacher Competence (1976) reported that "the manner in which the teacher relates to each child and to the parents of each child is the single most important ingredient in any early childhood program."

Teacher "competence" is a synthesis of knowledge, skills and attitudes and includes the ability to:

8.1 Design and implement programs for children -

a) observing and recording characteristics of children to enable program planning and identification of special problems;

b) planning and implementing program activities on the basis of the individual child's needs and interests; and

c) providing children with opportunities and activities to develop language, problem solving abilities, social skills, use of their five senses and muscle coordination.

8.2 Serve as an effective model of behavior for children and other adults -

a) demonstrating curiosity;

b) sharing information with parents;

c) encouraging the involvement of parents in their children's education;

d) communicating effectively, listening attentively, and speaking in a natural manner.

8.3 Facilitate the child's mastery and satisfaction in relating with other children, adults, and physical environments -
   a) encouraging children to actively explore their surroundings;
   b) displaying empathy for children's feelings;
   c) discussing with children their progress and achievements; and
   d) responding to each instance of undesirable behavior rather than applying rigid rules to fit all situations.

To ensure that staff will have the necessary competencies, it is important for local program operators and staff to:

8.4 Identify their staff development needs. Procedures for determining staff development needs include:
   a) identifying areas of child development and programming where knowledge and skills may be inadequate;
   b) acquiring the necessary information on child development;
   c) acquiring the skills necessary to plan, implement and evaluate a program which recognizes the relatedness of children's developmental needs;
   d) using appropriate methods for identifying and meeting the special needs of children and their families.

8.5 Plan, implement and evaluate, an in-service program based upon identified needs.

9. Coordination of Community Services

For Early Childhood Services to achieve its stated goals it is important for parents and staff to identify and use community and regional services concerned with young children and their families. From the child and family's perspective it is important that these services be perceived as accessible and coordinated. Therefore, to meet the needs of children and their families, it is important for ECS operators, coordinators and staff to:

9.1 identify community and regional resources which can be used to meet the needs of young children and their families.

9.2 use all available human and physical resources to enhance the content of local programs. For example, a swimming pool or a creative dance program.

9.3 consult resource people with specialized knowledge in the community, when appropriate.

9.4 plan, implement and evaluate procedures to enhance the coordination of services for young children and their families. This includes participating in regional coordinating activities.

Local programs, community services and government departments should:

9.5 identify needs of the community for health, social, educational or recreational services for young children and their families.

9.6 identify gaps in health, social, educational or recreational services for young children and their families.

9.7 procure and/or provide services if and when the need is identified by staff, families or communities.

9.8 use and support existing community services that meet the special needs of young children and their families.

9.9 encourage the independent yet coordinated functioning of services for young children and their families.

References

An extensive collection of research and theory on child development was used to derive the Program Dimensions outlined in this document. This bibliography is available to interested individuals on request from:

Early Childhood Services Branch,
Alberta Education,
10th Floor, West Tower,
Devonian Building,
11160 - Jasper Avenue,
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 0L2